

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON POINT PLEASANT POTTERY PIPES

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Several articles in the *Ohio Archaeologist* have called attention to the manufacture of reed stem clay tobacco pipes at Point Pleasant, Ohio (Shriver 1986, 1987; Holzapfel 1993). The present article is intended to provide additional information as well as correct a number of errors in these articles and other accounts in the literature.

As documented by Thomas and Burnett (1971) and Murphy (1985), there have actually been three distinct potteries producing clay tobacco pipes at Point Pleasant. The best known of these is the Cornwall Kirkpatrick-Nathan Davis-Peterson Brothers factory, which stood on the south bank of Big Indian Creek near the U.S. Route 52 highway bridge. This pottery was in production from ca. 1838 to ca. 1887. Although a pottery operated at this site by William P. Lakin stood here from ca. 1838 until his death in 1843, it is considered unlikely that pipe production occurred prior to operation of the pottery by Cornwall Kirkpatrick (1814-1890), which began in 1849. (Kirkpatrick had earlier operated a yellow ware pottery in Covington, Kentucky, and very likely produced a variety of yellowware reed stem pipes that have been found in the Cincinnati area before moving to Point Pleasant; as Kirkpatrick operated a pottery in Cincinnati subsequent to his operations at Point Pleasant, he may well have produced pipes there, as well.) It is certainly an exaggeration to state that the Point Pleasant pipes have been buried for 150 years (Heimlich 1979: 69), Monte Melvin's 1827 large cent notwithstanding (Holzapfel 1993: 11).

Although Thomas and Burnett (1971: 7) suggest that production continued to ca. 1890, there is no evidence that pipe production at the Kirkpatrick-Davis-Peterson Brothers factory continued after 1887, when the land was purchased by James W. McKibben from Samuel Cooper. The latest known reference to a pottery at this site is Williams' 1883 *Ohio Directory for 1883-1884*, which lists a Peterson and Cooper pottery (Williams 1883: 436).

It is this pottery that was so thoroughly dug through by the late Parker Melvin (Heimlich 1979; Holzapfel 1993) and others. Unfortunately, Melvin's research design was simply to accumulate as many complete pipes as possible. Neither he nor Thomas and Burnett attempted to make any controlled excavations at the site and Melvin's sole recorded observation on the distribution of pipe styles in the waster dump – that the ribbed forms found near

the bottom of his excavations were older than the anthropomorphic forms – is probably erroneous. My own observations, based on limited excavation within the confines of the factory foundations, indicated that the ribbed forms were most common here, possibly suggesting that they were among the latest types made. The point remains undetermined.

Several other statements by Parker Melvin that are clearly erroneous have crept into the popular literature (Heimlich 1979) and should be corrected. The Point Pleasant factory was certainly not "the first major American clay-pipe plant," there being numerous earlier factories, the most notable being Godfrey Aust's efforts at Salem and Bethbara, North Carolina. Sudbury (1979) provides a good synopsis of tobacco pipe production in the United States along with much data refuting Melvin's statement.

Nor is it accurate to state that "no one was even certain that a clay-pipe factory had existed at Point Pleasant, and no written record pinpointing its location had ever been found." The location is accurately shown on the 1870 Clermont County atlas, when it was operated by Nathan Davis. The site was never buried "under tons of Ohio River mud." The considerable depth at which Melvin found pipes was due to his digging along the edge of the creek bank, as waster material had naturally been dumped over the edge of the hillside. Nor is there any evidence for Melvin's theory that the Point Pleasant factory produced a different pipe style each year.

Melvin reported 65 separate pipe styles; Thomas and Burnett, 67. Murphy (1976) described 71, in addition to three described by Thomas and Burnett but not available to him. Thomas (1977: 13) reported 73 styles. Sudbury (1979) illustrated eight additional styles and (pers. comm.) has since discovered several additional ones. For the record, it should be noted in this regard that several of the pipes included in Figure 2 of Shriver (1986:31) definitely are not Point Pleasant pipe styles.

Finally, while these clay pipes are often sold today as "trade pipes," they were not made primarily for this function. Known distribution is over most of the United States, including a number of western sites, and one has been reported from "an Indian village site dating about 1885" (Emory Strong, cited in Thomas and Burnett 1972: 12) but the vast majority are from non-Indian sites. It is a considerable

exaggeration to state that "A number have been found in historic contact Indian graves, principally in the west, suggesting their probable use in mid and late-19th century fur and other trade" (Shriver 1986: 30), for I know of no documented occurrences in Indian graves. While some may have been traded to Indians, this was incidental and a miniscule segment of the market.

Products of the Kirkpatrick-Davis-Peterson Brothers pottery are the most common Point Pleasant pipes found and have been frequently illustrated in the literature (Thomas and Burnett 1972; Thomas 1977; Murphy 1975; Shriver 1986, 1987; Heimlich 1979).

If any portions of the Kirkpatrick-Davis-Peterson Brothers pottery site (33-CT-256) were left undisturbed by Parker Melvin and other pipe collectors, they were completely destroyed by replacement of the Grant Memorial Bridge in 1985. Although the Ohio Historic Preservation Office was assured by the Ohio Dept. of Transportation that the bridge replacement project would not impact the site, pilings for the temporary highway bridge across Big Indian Creek were constructed directly on the pottery site and waster dump. This roadwork thoroughly destroyed the remainder of the pottery site and removed the possibility of excavating any stratified deposits not previously impacted by Parker Melvin and other pipe diggers.

The second pottery site in Point Pleasant is also shown on the 1870 Clermont County atlas (Fig. 1). It was operated by Tom Peterson on the opposite (north) bank of Big Indian Creek and slightly upstream from the Kirkpatrick-Peterson pottery. It is believed that this pottery was operated by Thomas' sons, Henry and George Peterson, who are listed as Peterson & Bro. in the 1870 manufacturer's schedule, producing "jars, jugs, and crocks" valued at \$1000 per year. Murphy (1985) provides additional documentation on this pottery site (33-Ct-390), which is now owned by the Ohio Historical Society. Rist (cited in Sudbury 1979: 183) believed that the last operator of this pottery was Henry Bushman and that production ceased about 1901. Bushman (1843-1917), a nephew of Nathan Davis, is listed in an 1896 directory as "Pipe Manufacturer," and the 1910 federal census lists a Charles Bushman, presumably a son, as operating a pipe factory. While the information remains sketchy, it appears that the Tom

The confusion arises when we consider another early Point Pleasant photograph (Fig. 5) reproduced from "The Illustrated

According to the late Don Rist (cited in Sudbury 1979: 183), the Bainum/Thomas B. Peterson pottery was known as the Clermont Pottery, and Rist should have known, as he purchased the pipe machine used in the Clermont Pottery from Thomas B. Peterson in 1944. Rist (in Sudbury 1979) also documents the oper-

Much remains to be learned about the three distinct clay tobacco pipe factories at Point Pleasant, but events over the last thirty years have radically reduced the amount of information to be gleaned from archaeological research. Any additional knowledge will probably derive from archival and historical research.

Heimlich, Jane
1979 Parker Melvin's Pipes of Clay.
American 7 (3): 68-70.

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Murphy, James L.
1976 Reed Stem Tobacco Pipes from Point Pleasant, Clermont County, Ohio. *Northeast Historical Archaeology* 5 (1-2): 12-27 .I

Shriver, Phillip R.
1986 A Perspective on Point Pleasant Pottery Pipes. *Ohio Archaeologist* 36 (4): 30-32 .

1987 A Point Pleasant Pottery Effigy Pipe. *Ohio Archaeologist* 37 (1) : 14 .

Sudbury, Byron
1979 Historic Clay Tobacco Pipemakers in the United States of America. *The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe, II*, ed . by Peter Davey . BAR International Series, 60, pp . 151-337 .

1986 An Update on the Status of Pipe Manufacturing Sites at Point Pleasant, Ohio. *Historic Clay Tobacco Pipe Studies*, 3:60-62.

Thomas, B.B. (Ted), Jr., and Richard M. Burnett
1972 A Study of Clay Smoking Pipes Produced at a Nineteenth Century Kiln at Point Pleasant, Ohio. *The Conference on Historic Site Archaeology Papers* 1971, 6 (pt. 1): 1-31.

Thomas, B.B. (Ted), Jr.
1977 Clay Smoking Pipes Produced at Point Pleasant, Ohio. *Spinning Wheel*, April, 1977: 13-16.

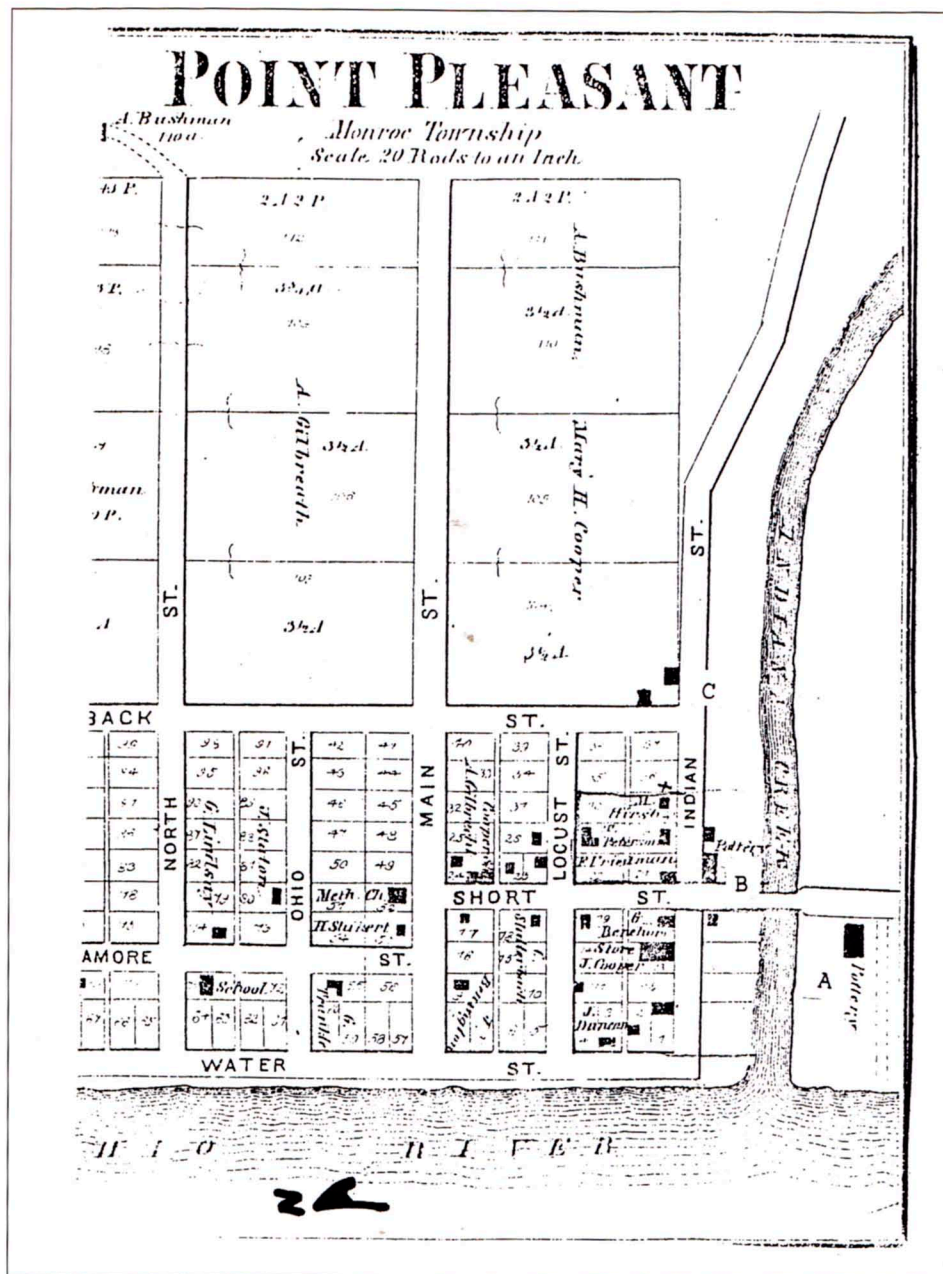


Fig. 1 Map of Point Pleasant from Lake's 1870 atlas of Clermont County.
A = Kirkpatrick/Davis/Peterson Bros. pottery.
B = Tom Peterson pottery.
C = Site of later Peterson/Bainum Pottery and Grant Memorial Church.

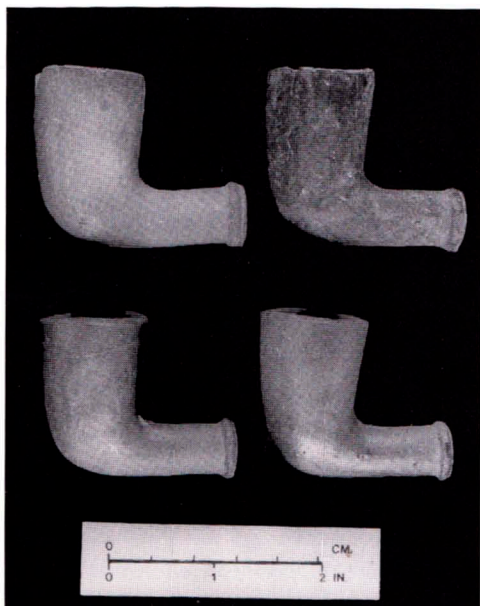


Fig. 2 Tom Peterson Plain tobacco pipes, Var. a.



Figure 3 Tom Peterson Plain tobacco pipes, Var. e.



Fig. 4 Undated postcard view of "The Oldest Clay Pipe Factory in U.S.," looking northeast from intersection of Indian Street and Back St., Point Pleasant. Now the site of Grant Memorial Church.

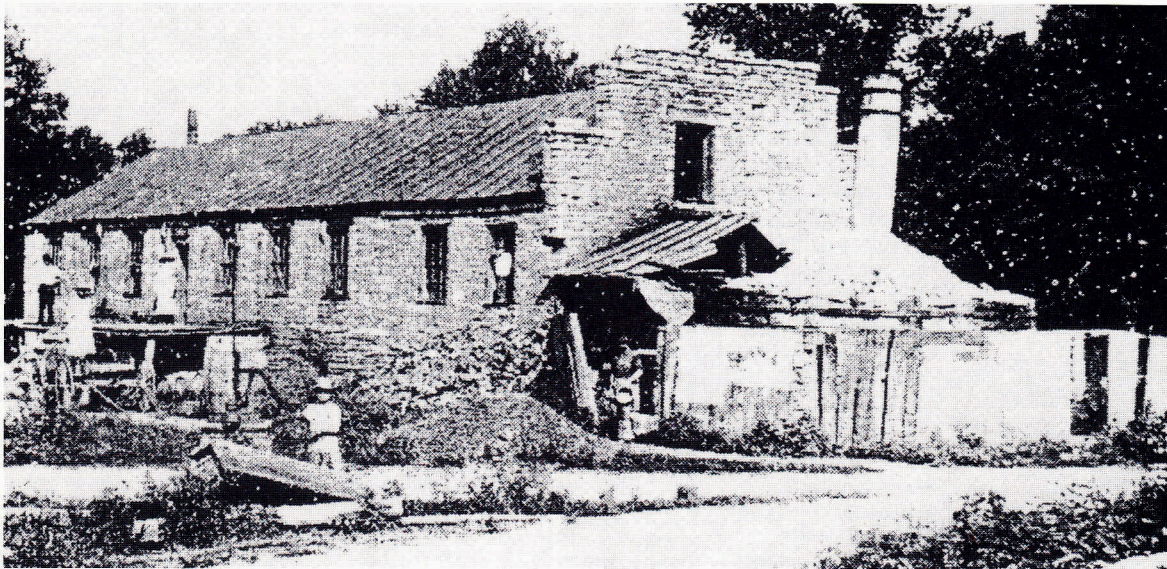


Fig. 5 Photo of "Old Pipe Kiln at Point Pleasant, Ohio." Reproduced with permission from Sudbury (1986). The photograph was published in the *Batavia Clermont Sun* in 1971 and attributed to "The Illustrated Clermonter" of 1900. Robert K. Slade identifies this stone building as the Bainum and Peterson pottery, which stood at the present site of the Grant Memorial Church.

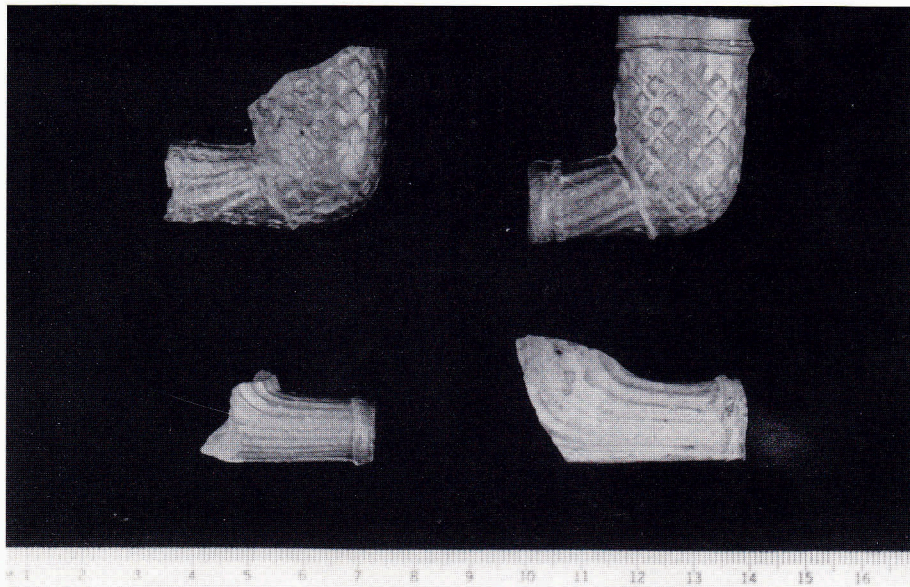


Fig. 6. The only two pipe styles known to be associated with the Bainum/Peterson pottery, found opposite the Grant Memorial Church, at left edge of Fig. 4.